

First record of Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* for Angola

Michael S. L. Mills

Primeiro registo de tarambola-dourada-siberiana *Pluvialis fulva* para Angola. A 18 de fevereiro de 2014, duas tarambolas-douradas-siberianas *Pluvialis fulva* foram fotografadas na baía do Mussulo, província de Luanda, Angola. Este é o primeiro registo para o país.

On 18 February 2014 I visited the southern tip of Mussulo Bay, Angola, with N. Rocha and J. Mills. Mussulo is an Important Bird Area located just south of Luanda city and is used by large numbers of Palearctic-breeding shorebirds during the austral summer (Dean 2001). At the far southern tip of the bay we located a single golden plover *Pluvialis* sp. adjacent to some saltpans. We drove to within 20 m of the bird and photographed it (Figs. 1–3). To obtain flight views, which might

assist to differentiate what are two very similar species, Pacific *P. fulva* and American Golden Plovers *P. dominica*, we continued our approach. When the bird flushed we were inside the vehicle and failed to obtain sufficiently good views to establish whether the feet projected beyond the tail. Fortunately, we managed to relocate the bird nearby on a sandbar at the edge of the bay, where it had joined a second bird in similar plumage. We walked towards them, but they again flushed



Figures 1–3. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Mussulo Bay, Luanda province, Angola, 18 February 2014 (Michael Mills & Nito Rocha)

Figuras 1–3. Tarambola-dourada-siberiana *Pluvialis fulva*, baía do Mussulo, província de Luanda, Angola, 18 fevereiro 2014 (Michael Mills & Nito Rocha)

without permitting definitive views, although N. Rocha was reasonably confident that he had seen the feet projecting beyond the tail. Thereafter, we failed to relocate the birds.

Overall, the photographed bird had reasonably strong golden spotting on the upperparts and an extensive yellow-buff wash to the face (Figs. 1–3). The area immediately behind the eye was yellowish and the ear-coverts formed a dark post-ocular spot. It lacked a capped appearance and the supercilium was not very distinct. The wing projection beyond the tip of the tail was short. Although very hard to judge in the field without direct comparison, the legs and bill appeared proportionately long. All of these features indicate that the bird was a Pacific Golden Plover (Dunn *et al.* 1987, Johnson & Johnson 2004, Hockey *et al.* 2005), further supported by the probability that the feet projected beyond the tail. The second bird was less yellow / golden than the first, but I assume it was the same species. The third species in the group, European Golden Plover *P. apricaria*, has not been recorded in southern Africa or in West Africa south of Senegambia (Urban *et al.* 1986, Borrow & Demey 2014). This makes its occurrence in Angola highly improbable, and the possibility of the photographed bird being this species can be eliminated by (i) the unmarked malar area, which is streaked in *P. apricaria*, (ii) the bill being longer and heavier than in European Golden Plover, (iii) the more lightly streaked breast than in the latter species, (iv) the longer and paler legs than *apricaria*, and (v) the upperparts having coarser and sparser spotting than in European Golden Plover (K. Mullarney pers. comm.).

Pacific Golden Plover is a fairly common non-breeding migrant to coasts of north-east Africa, an uncommon migrant inland in East Africa and a rare vagrant to southern and West Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986, Hockey *et al.* 2005, Borrow & Demey 2014). Within southern Africa, it has been recorded mostly in South Africa, but also in Zimbabwe (Bulawayo) and Namibia (Swakopmund), and in West Africa there are records from coastal Gabon, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Ghana, and probable records from Togo and Nigeria. There are no previous records in Angola, although it was expected to occur during the austral summer (Dean 2000, Mills & Melo 2013).

Acknowledgements

The following individuals assisted in the identification process by commenting on the photographs: Mark Boorman, Jenny Norman, Joakim Djerf, Pierre Defos du Rau, Paul Gaffan, Nik Borrow, Stephen Lowe, David Winter, Barry Wright, Hugh Gallagher, Clive Barlow and Nigel Redman. I am especially grateful to Killian Mullarney for his assistance in eliminating European Golden Plover. Ron Demey kindly commented on the manuscript and Martim Melo assisted with the Portuguese translations.

References

- Borrow, N. & Demey, R. 2014. *Birds of Western Africa*. Second edn. London, UK: Christopher Helm.
- Dean, W. R. J. 2000. *The Birds of Angola: An Annotated Checklist*. BOU Checklist No. 18. Tring: British Ornithologists' Union.
- Dean, W. R. J. (2001) Angola. In Fishpool, L. D. C. & Evans, M. I. (eds.) *Important Bird Areas in Africa and Associated Islands: Priority Sites for Conservation*. Newbury: Pisces Publications & Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
- Dunn, J. L., Morlan, J. & Wilds, C. P. 1987. Field identification of forms of Lesser Golden-Plover. In *Proc. 4th Intern. Identification Meeting* (1986). Eilat: International Birdwatching Center.
- Hockey, P. A. R., Dean, W. R. J. & Ryan, P. G. (eds.) 2005. *Roberts—Birds of Southern Africa*. Seventh edn. Cape Town: Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund.
- Johnson, O. W. & Johnson, P. M. 2004. Morphometric features of Pacific and American Golden-Plovers with comments on field identification. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 103: 42–49.
- Mills, M. & Melo, M. 2013. *The Checklist of the Birds of Angola*. Luanda: Associação Angolana para Aves e Natureza (AvesAngola) and Birds Angola.
- Urban, E. K., Fry, C. H. & Keith, S. (eds.) 1986. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 2. London, UK: Academic Press.
- A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, University of Jos, PO Box 13404, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. E-mail: michael@birdingafrica.com*
- DST / NRF Centre of Excellence at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa.*

Received 28 May 2014; revision accepted 30 August 2014.